2 What We've Learned About Safe and Effective Schools

"A classroom is saturated with interests, desires, and talents; one of my goals as a teacher was to tap into these sources of energy."[1]

One component of school safety is easy to see. The physical environment (place)—including perimeter security, metal detectors, and guards—is tangible and sometimes seems to be the most efficient means of preserving school safety. Chapter 6 provides more details on how to strengthen this component of school safety.

However, physical security is the second most important component of a safe school**.** The first is the school's climate (people and programs**)**—the heart of a safe and effective school. A growing body of research teaches us that this first component is actually our best "line of defense."

So, what does the research show? It shows that "relationship-rich" schools—where students are valued as contributing members of a caring community—are safer schools, less prone to vandalism and aggression, and more conducive to learning.

Building young people's strengths rather than focusing on managing their problems is the heart of the positive youth development model, resiliency research, *and* school safety and effectiveness. Researchers developed the model after looking at what kept the "good" kids on track.

Caring: A Skill, Not an Emotion

Sacramento City Unified School District's Sutter Middle School provides a case study for this "asset-based" approach to school safety and success. Since 1999, when the school earned an Academic Performance Index (API) score of 777 (below the state goal of at least 800), test scores have soared thanks to a highly disciplined staff and their commitment to creating a safe and caring environment. A recent article in the *Sacramento Bee* explained some of the strategies that have led to tremendous gains at the school:

> [Principal Greg] Purcell is renowned for the way the kids' names roll off his tongue, a gesture that many at Sutter believe is a natural gift but which turns out, like almost everything else there, to be a product of the principal's highly disciplined personal regimen.
>
> On a desk in his office, Purcell has a binder filled with his students' pictures, and he thumbs through it daily, connecting faces to names. He also carries in his pocket a little yellow note card on which he has written in tiny print the names of students and something notable about them he wants to remember. When no one is watching, he pulls out the card and studies it.
>
> "I want to know the kids," Purcell told me as we climbed the stairs to the third-floor hallway where he likes to spend every passing period. "I want to have a connection with them, and for them to know I am not just a figurehead who sits in his office and shuffles papers."
>
> The floor on which they're walking is squeaky clean. One reason: Purcell himself picks up litter whenever he sees it. And the kids follow his example. A patrol of five students detached in rotating crews stroll the campus at all times, cleaning up, raking leaves, and doing minor maintenance. A banner outside the office proclaims "Sutter Middle School—The Pride of the City."

That pride only begins with the tidy grounds. Mr. Becker, the algebra teacher, says Sutter's teachers push their students to the limit, but no further. "They have more work, more research projects, and the projects are more complex," he said.

Teachers elsewhere complain they don't have time to teach the standards and also offer the enrichment they think students need. How does Sutter squeeze it all in?

Merri Lynn Carver, whose son Alex left [a local private school] for Sutter last year, said he was up to speed in math but behind in science and writing. What most impressed Carver was the caring and attentive approach she found from everyone at Sutter. When Alex was struggling to keep up early in his first year, three of his teachers called her at home.

"They just said they'd noticed an unusual pattern and wanted to know what was going on," she said. "They wanted to get to work on turning it around." The result of that kind of attention is a set of test scores that are the envy of the district, and beyond. The average scores of Sutter's students on the *SAT-9* exam are in the seventieth and eightieth percentile in reading, math, language, and spelling. About three-quarters of Sutter's students perform above the national average. That translates into an API score of 839 on the state's new Academic Performance Index, a mark that puts Sutter not only in the top 10 percent statewide but also in the top echelon among schools with similar demographics.[2]

The Characteristics of a Safe and Effective School

Beyond the commitment to knowing students and maintaining a pleasant school environment, there are many other "vital signs" of an effective and safe school. Safe and effective schools . . .

1. ***Start early***—One of the most consistent findings in research on effective violence prevention is that programs must start in the early grades.

   "Early childhood is increasingly recognized as a key stage in the development of aggressive violent behaviors. The development of self-regulation appears to be important during the preschool years. It is also causally linked to other processes that lead to aggressive-violent behavior. Adult to child ratios and the quality of these adult/child interactions are key environmental influences in the development of self-regulation."[3]

   The programs that make the most difference are those in the elementary grades or even preschool. Teachers at Beaverton's (Oregon) William Walker Elementary School are trained to identify antisocial children during the first week of school. Those children go to an alternative recess, where they are taught how to play together. They may have to check in with a counselor when they arrive at school or stay in a monitor's sight on the playground. During the past three years, those and related efforts have reduced suspensions from 175 a year, the highest in the district, to fewer than a dozen a year. "Poor

children who attend intensive preschool classes are more likely to graduate from high school and less likely to be arrested than poor children who have not participated in such programs, according to a study that followed graduates of urban preschools for 15 years."[4]

2. ***Respect and connect students while communicating high behavioral expectations***—Teachers and staff find many ways to help students feel that they are known and cared about. They name the strengths they see students using—even when talking about negative behaviors. For example, when talking with students who had been fighting, the adult can name strengths; for example, "You have a strong sense of justice. What are some other ways you could express your need for justice in a situation like this?"

   Safe and effective schools communicate and enforce respect by maintaining high standards through dress codes and codes of conduct for both students and adults.

   - *Respect others.*
     - Show multicultural awareness and appreciation.
     - Use respectful language and behavior.
     - Wear clothes that comply with the dress code.
     - Stop any bullying.
     - Resolve conflicts without fights.

     Researchers confirm the protective power of firm guidance, challenge, and stimulation—and the loving support inherent in students' being respected and having their strengths and abilities recognized. Successful teachers refuse to label their students as 'at risk.' These teachers are trained to look for children's strengths and interests and make use of them for learning.

   - *Foster students' respect for self.*
     - Set goals for academic success and advancement.
     - Avoid drug and alcohol use.
     - Choose behaviors that lead to health and fitness.

     "During the last decade, research on successful programs for youth at risk of academic failure has clearly demonstrated that high expectations—coupled with support—is [sic] a critical factor in decreasing the number of students who drop out of school and in increasing the number of youth who go on to college. According to Phyllis Hart of the Achievement Council (a California-based advocacy group), when a poor, inner-city school established a college core curriculum, over 65 percent of its graduates went on to higher education—up from 15 percent before the program began. Several students stated that 'having one person who believed I could do it' was a major factor in their decision to attend college."[5]

     Involve students, staff, and parents in developing both dress and behavior codes. Students and parents will support and preserve

what they help create. Make sure that gang attire is prohibited, and train staff in how to consistently and fairly enforce the dress code. Contradictory policies and inconsistent enforcement send mixed messages to students. Staff should serve as role models for students in both behavior and dress.

Schools and districts should develop and distribute a parent and student handbook to all students at the beginning of each school year. It should contain information about:

- Student and parent rights and responsibilities
- District programs
- Security requirements
- Classroom conduct
- Disciplinary policies
- Health and welfare programs
- The school calendar

Require parents and students to provide written acknowledgment that they have received and read the student behavior code handbook, and reward them in some manner for having done so. Excellent examples of both a student and parent handbook and a *Code of Conduct* handbook are included as Appendix C in *School Violence Prevention and Response*.[6]

- *Celebrate achievement.*

  The other side of high expectations is the joy in rewarding success. Schools that succeed make sure that students take part in setting the goals and that they receive ample encouragement for making or exceeding those goals. For example, a school might ask a local television or radio station to put the names of students who *excel* (e.g., in track, academics, science fair, homework completion, tutoring of younger students) on their news shows. Display student work throughout the school. Include stories about individual and group achievements in newsletters to students, parents, and the community.

- *Assign students meaningful roles throughout the school.*

  Students play important roles in running their schools as office helpers, playground organizers (e.g., managing equipment or leading organized play activities), and classroom helpers (e.g., getting materials for their teams or working on assigned tasks within teams). Students are active members of the safe school planning committee and other governance bodies. Even as early as elementary school, students can contribute suggestions and evaluations of prevention curriculum that focuses on good decision making, responsible citizenship, and conflict resolution. Students who help identify and implement safety strategies will have a stake in keeping their campuses safe.

"Schools, as communities, should see themselves as employers. Every student in the school should have an important and meaningful job. Every student should be developing specific skills and experiences that can be added to his or her resume. Every student should be given performance reviews and recommendations. . . . Too often, the jobs—hall monitor, newspaper editor, student council member, patrol, and line leader—are given out as rewards to those who excel or, at a minimum, behave in class. Is this the best use of these jobs? Is this practice supportive of youth development? [Schools could] develop jobs that students value, job descriptions that reflect job-specific employment criteria, and open up the application process to the full student body. Student success could be measured not just in academic performance but in connection and contribution to the school community."[7]

Involve students in:

- Planning and management of student events
- Campus beautification
- Crime reporting (Encourage students to report any suspicious individuals on school grounds and provide both students and staff with a toll-free, anonymous hot line for reporting weapons offenses and other criminal activity.)

- *Use a "prosocial" focus.*

  Research on cooperative learning found that strengthening social skills can have a positive effect on cognitive development and learning.[8] Weave programs that actively teach problem solving and group interaction into classroom management and school norms.

- *Use service learning.*

  Youth service opportunities are a regular part of the school program. Service learning, as defined by the National and Community Service Trust Act (1993) is "an innovative instructional method that actively involves youth in the curriculum through service to their community." Service learning differs from traditional community service activities in that it intentionally *integrates* the service experience with the curriculum. (See Chapter 3 for more examples of service learning.)

- *Teach students to transition from school to work.*

  High schools include a strong youth employment and vocational training program that includes intensive educational components.

- *Follow through.*

  Effective schools have a process for following up with students—either after conducting a behavior intervention or after hearing about trouble in the home.

3. ***Promote effective classroom management***—"Teachers send signals nonverbally—for instance, in the way they grade homework. Marking an assignment with a big red X sends a signal of judgment and blame. Handing back papers in the order of highest grade to lowest or asking students to grade each other's papers is a devastating signal. It makes that poor performance public knowledge."[9]

   A positive learning environment is the best defense against school violence and is described in *Classroom Management—A California Resource Guide*.[10] Essential indicators of a positive learning environment include the following:

   - Students feel respected and valued.
   - Lessons are tailored to students' individual learning styles and abilities.
   - Students have many meaningful roles in the classroom.
   - Discipline is a shared responsibility.
   - Positive behavior support minimizes learning disruptions.

4. ***Stay small***—Both the school and the classrooms are small, or if the school is on a large campus, the school employs "schools within a school" to reduce anonymity and promote bonding.

5. ***Create community connections***—A dynamic partnership with the community includes volunteers and mentors in the classroom, health and family services on campus, community members on every committee, and recognition and incentive programs for the students. (See Chapter 3.)

   - *Involve law enforcement partners.*

     Members of the law enforcement community are regular staff at the school and are included on committees, in classroom lessons, in tutoring and mentoring relationships, and in after-school activities. Schools that establish collaboration with other community agencies have a system in place to refer students with problems to agencies and professionals who can meet their needs. These types of referral systems need to be in place for elementary students so that they learn positive social behaviors early in their school career. (See Chapter 5.)

   - *Involve parents.*

     From preschool through high school, parents are included as partners in their children's education. Effective schools include them on the safety committee, in planning meetings, and in recognition celebrations.

6. ***Use tested security measures***—The campus perimeter is secured, and there is a carefully monitored visitor policy. (This is part of component 2 of a safe school—see Chapter 6.)

7. ***Avoid "institutionalizing" negative peer groups***—The school makes every effort to mainstream students who have been identified with discipline and behavior problems and to avoid homogenous groupings that have the potential to reinforce negative behavior. The school engages potentially antisocial youth in leadership roles, community service, cross-age tutoring, intergenerational programs, and other group activities that reinforce positive relationships.

   According to a report of the surgeon general, the decrease in youth violence has not been matched by a decrease in antisocial behavior. One of the risk factors is antisocial peer networks, or "reinforced deviancy." The report recommends that schools break up antisocial peer networks, increase academic success, and create a positive school climate.[11]

   "A key task of early adolescence is the development of a stable peer group. Whether that peer group is primarily prosocial or antisocial in orientation significantly affects the probability of aggressive and violent behavior."[12]

8. ***Evaluate results and refine the approach***—Safe and effective schools keep a close watch on how their programs are working, and they make sure that the research is sound before adopting programs. (See "Checklist for Evaluating Research-Based Practices" on page 24.)

Safe and Effective Programs

We no longer have to rely on our own creativity to design programs that promote school safety, achievement, and health. New data on program effectiveness provide us with numerous descriptions of programs that have demonstrated their effectiveness over a period of years. For example, data on the *Good Behavior Game* demonstrate that it helps to reduce early aggressive behaviors *and* continues to show positive results by middle school. Teacher ratings, peer nomination, and independent classroom observations have been used to measure its effectiveness. In each measure it showed positive effects for both sexes by the end of the first grade, compared to children in the control group. By middle school, evaluators found positive results for males who had displayed early aggressive behavior in first grade. They also discovered a 6 percent lower tobacco use for participants.

- The *Good Behavior Game* incorporates several components of an effective program (italicized throughout the description):
  - The game is designed for children in first grade (*start early*) and is aimed at reducing aggressive and shy behaviors.
  - It improves the teacher's ability to define tasks, set rules, and discipline students *(set clear expectations).*
  - The teacher assigns children to teams, balancing each team with equal numbers of aggressive/disruptive children and social isolates *(know each child; avoid tracking or segregating children).*

- The teams operate so that the individual is responsible to the rest of the *group (cooperative learning, peer helping, service learning).*
- The teacher clearly defines a set of disruptive behaviors that, if displayed, will result in the team's receiving a demerit. At the end of the game, teams that have not exceeded the maximum number of demerits are rewarded *(prosocial focus).*
- Because the program seeks to modify the behavior of shy children without labeling them as such, shy children are often appointed "team leaders" with the responsibility for handing out prizes *(give meaningful roles and responsibilities).*
- After students are familiar with the rules of the game, the teacher begins the game with no warning, so students are always aware of their own behavior. Teams can follow their progress on a wall chart (*evaluation*).[13]

Several other programs also employ a youth development focus and have demonstrated their effectiveness through evaluation:

- *The Caring School Community Program* was derived from the award-winning Child Development Project (CDP)**.** The program is not a discrete "curriculum" that is separate from the regular, ongoing activities of the classroom and school. Instead, CDP influences all aspects of the school—curriculum, teaching methods, organization, management, and climate.

  CDP is designed for students in elementary school and is based on research showing that primary prevention efforts are most likely to succeed when they start early—before destructive behavior patterns are set. The project's emphasis on the positive development of all children, rather than on "fixing" those deemed at risk, is a major factor in its success as a prevention program.

  To create a caring community of learners, CDP includes an intensive classroom program, a schoolwide component, and a family involvement component. The classroom component has three major parts:

  - Cooperative learning puts students in pairs or small groups to work on tasks that are inherently interesting and require collaboration.
  - A literature-based language arts curriculum accommodates diversity in experience, ability, and achievement and gives all students access to high-quality literature. It also provides opportunities to engage each other's thinking about important social, cultural, and ethical issues that are relevant to their lives.
  - "Developmental discipline" helps students develop a personal, internalized commitment to responsible and caring behavior by emphasizing a proactive, teaching approach to discipline that provides students with adult guidance and opportunities to learn and practice self-control.

The CDP program had positive effects on students that continued when they were in middle school. One significant benefit was the students' *connection to school*. Students from "high change" CDP elementary schools saw their middle schools as being more of a *community* than did comparison students. They liked school more, engaged in less misconduct at school, had higher academic achievement, and expected to complete more schooling than comparison students complete.[14]

- *Big Brothers/Big Sisters (BB/BS)*—although not a school-based program—provides strong evidence about the effectiveness of pairing young people with one caring adult. In a three-year study of the program in eight geographically diverse cities, BB/BS produced an increase in grade point average, especially among minority girls. It also reduced by 50 percent the number of days of school students skipped, and it reduced violent behavior by one-third. In addition, significant decreases in drug and alcohol use were noted.[15]
- The *Consistency Management and Cooperative Discipline (CMCD)* program emphasizes prevention, shared responsibility between teacher and student, value-based discipline, increased communication with parents, and effective instruction. Research and evaluation of the program over a ten-year period show that students in the program had significantly higher achievement scores on national and statewide tests. Schools using CMCD had from 54 percent to 74 percent fewer disciplinary office referrals. The research also showed improvements in the overall learning environment.[16]
- Public health experts list the *Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP)* as one of the most promising violence prevention programs now in operation. Its uniqueness is its focus on creating school change. School and classroom management is based on a nonviolent value system so that students have a safe environment where they are encouraged to explore peaceful ways of resolving conflict.[17]
- An inquiry method of teaching conflict resolution is explained in *Schools That Learn*.[18] In it, fighters must write a description of what happened—and every sentence must begin with the word *I.* If they write, "He hit me," they have to rewrite the statement using *I.* So, "He hit me" may turn into "I stood in his way," leading to a discussion about how the student could handle the situation next time.
- The Peacemakers Program is another approach to nonviolent schools. It employs a classroom-based, violence prevention curriculum, and, like the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program, infuses a violence-free ethic into the entire school culture. Evaluation of Peacemakers showed a 41 percent reduction in aggression-related disciplinary incidents and a 67 percent decrease in suspensions for violent behavior.[19]

How to Involve Students in Safe School Planning and Implementation

by Dustin Hall

Member of the California Youth Council Alumni Staff, California Friday Night Live Partnership

Why Youth Involvement Improves Safe School Planning

- *It trains all leaders on intergenerational relationships*. It develops strong and positive relationships, a key to attaining successful outcomes.
- *It involves young people in visible leadership roles.* Involving youth in governance fosters their fullest participation.
- *It trains young leaders.* By bringing young people into leadership roles, we foster growth and shared learning among young people and across diverse groups.
- *It builds a network of adults who support young leaders.* Young people are a force and lead by example. They are inclusive, visionary, willing to serve, and inspiring. They celebrate diversity, are committed, and are accountable.

Role of Youth in Planning a Safe School

The youth ally in the safe school planning process provides a true-to-life insight into the campus. Students have unique perceptions of other students and the school's physical environment, including all the unsafe zones on the campus. Involvement of a diverse group of students provides accurate information about the school's social environment, and a complete representation of the school's culture.

Token Youth Involvement

Using students as figureheads to give the appearance that they are partners in the school planning process is detrimental to the safe school plan and to the students themselves. Token involvement implies being used, and diminishes the student/teacher relationship necessary for learning.

Training Needed for Youth

Formal training on the safe school writing process is not necessary. What may be necessary, however, is an honest discussion between the safe school writer and the youth allies. Discussion points include:

- Reviewing the most current Safe School Plan
- Honest discussion about the role of the youth (either as a link to the student community, culture, and perception, or as writers themselves) and also including honest discussion about how student involvement will affect the final safe school plan.

Tips on Involving Youth—What Worked

It is necessary to create an atmosphere of honesty and mutual trust. To get a diverse group, randomly select two or three students—any students—to provide not only a list of all of the subcultures on campus, but also a list of the leaders within each subculture.

1. Reach out beyond the traditional leaders.
2. Revolve the planning meetings around student schedules.
3. Provide food at the meetings to ensure more energy. Comfort established by a conversation around a snack or meal will carry over into planning discussions.
4. Validate the young people for their participation in meaningful or practical ways like school credit, community service hours, stipends, gift certificates, or letters of recommendation.

Impact on Achievement and Feelings About School

The safe school planning process is an opportunity to engage a cross-section of students who are not already involved in leadership roles. The involvement could lead to higher self-esteem and other successes in academic and school life.

The Top 10 Things Youth Need from Adults

In April 2000, more than 500 young people came together for four days at the Teenwork Training Institute in Costa Mesa, California (*http://www.teenwork.com/*). They worked with adult partners to identify the top ten things youth need from adults:

1. Get to know us! Don't make judgments or stereotypes based on first impressions.
2. Recognize our wisdom and treat us with respect. Trust us to try it on our own.
3. Believe in us and never, ever give up on us.
4. Provide help, support, and guidance with patience, care, and love.
5. Listen. Value youths' opinions and feelings. Be our advocate and ally.
6. Be positive role models. Be trustworthy, honest, fair, and dependable.
7. Provide job opportunities!
8. Make time for us.
9. Work with us in partnership. Have fun with us and teach us what you know.
10. Provide a range of opportunities that are safe, playful, and help us make a difference.

Not All Programs Are Created Equal

" . . . Intervention strategies exist today that can be tailored to the needs of youths at every stage of development, from young childhood to late adolescence. There is no justification for pessimism about reaching young people who already may be involved in serious violence. Another critical bit of information from . . . the research literature is that all intervention programs are not equally suited to all children and youths. A program that may be effective for one age may be ineffective for older or younger children. Certain hastily adopted and implemented strategies may be ineffective—and even deleterious—for all children and youth."[20]

The information presented in *Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General* shows that prevention *works—and* it can be cost effective. In several cases, the long-term financial benefits of prevention were substantially greater than the costs of the programs themselves. Other findings from that report show the following:

- Most highly effective programs combine components that deal with both individual risks and environmental conditions.
- At the time the report was prepared, nearly half of the most thoroughly evaluated strategies for preventing violence had been shown to be ineffective—and a few were known to harm participants.
- In schools, interventions that target change in the social context appear to be more effective, on average, than those that attempt to change individual attitudes, abilities, and risk behaviors.
- Involvement with delinquent peers and gang membership are two of the most powerful predictors of violence, yet few *effective* interventions have been developed to deal with these problems.
- Program effectiveness depends as much on the quality of implementation as the type of intervention. Many programs are ineffective because the quality of implementation is poor.

A comprehensive 15,000-hour study of classroom strategies showed both the positive and negative results of different types of behavior reinforcement. For example, when teachers used students to help set up learning stations before lessons, both behavior problems and transition time were reduced. Likewise, the study showed a positive correlation between academic achievement and the number of meaningful roles and tasks the school assigned to students. Another interesting finding was that when teachers made rewards schoolwide rather than just for their own classes, students bonded better to the school and had fewer chances of engaging in antisocial behavior. However, some common school policies had a negative effect on students. For example, when administrators "threw the book" at students, delinquency increased. Similarly, nagging, scolding, and other behavior-corrections that disrupt the flow of instruction increased behavior problems.[21]

Checklist for Evaluating Research-Based Practices

If your school is looking to buy a prepackaged program, how do you know which ones work? Researchers developed the following checklist to help schools take a critical look at programs before choosing them for their students:

- Is the program based on theory that is accepted by experts in the field?
- Does the theory provide a logical explanation of why the program should work?
- Did the program produce the desired changes in the target population?
- Was the research conducted by reputable researchers and published in a reputable journal (preferably a peer-reviewed journal)?
- Did the study use a rigorous evaluation design? Was it conducted by outside researchers?
- Did the study show no negative effects?
- Was the study replicated at more than one site?
- Did school staff in the study implement the program?
- Were the study students similar to students in our district?
- Does the program appear to be cost effective?
- What support is provided?
- Was the study student population similar to our schools' population?
- Are references available from schools that have used the program?

(See <*http://www.californiahealthykids*>.)

Figure 2-1 compares research on effective violence prevention programs. Specific page references from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP) document are in parentheses after each topic.[22]

The third column is taken from *Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General*.[23]

For more information on effective programs, see "Databases of Effective Programs" later in this chapter.

Figure 2-1 Research on the Effectiveness of Violence Prevention Programs

Effective Strategies	*OJJDP Guide*	*Youth Violence*
Primary Prevention		
Behavioral techniques for classroom management	**X** (pp. 64, 66, 67–69)	**X**
Reductions in class size	**X** (p. 63)	
Behavior monitoring and reinforcement		**X**
Skills training		**X**
Monitoring and reinforcing the requirements of school attendance, academic progress, and school behavior	**X** (pp. 79–84; bullying prevention: p. 80)	
Building school capacity		**X**
Computer-assisted instruction	**X** (p. 65)	
Continuous-progress instructional strategiesæstudents proceed through a defined hierarchy of skills; tested for mastery before advancing to next skill set	**X** (p. 64)	**X**
Cooperative learning	**X** (p. 64)	**X**
After-school recreation	**X** (p. 95)	
Nongraded elementary schools	**X** (p. 63)	
Positive youth development programs		**X**
Structured playground activities	**X** (p. 63)	
Tutoring	**X** (p. 65)	
Youth employment and vocational training programs with intensive education components	**X** (pp. 102–09)	
Youth service programs	**X** (pp. 100–02)	
Secondary Prevention		
Community policing	**X** (p. 120)	
Diagnostic and prescriptive pullout programs	**X**	
Gang-prevention curricula, gang crisis intervention and mediation	**X** (pp. 96–100)	
Intensified motorized patrol of school grounds	**X**	
Parent training	**X** (pp. 84–6)	**X**
Home visitation		**X**
Compensatory education		**X**
Mentoring relationships that include behavior management techniques	**X** (pp. 90–5)	
Moral reasoning		**X**
Neighborhood block watch	**X** (p. 124)	
Social problem solving		**X**
Appropriate placements for disruptive secondary school students	**X** (pp. 70–2)	
Tertiary Prevention		
Thinking skills		**X**
Police interrogations of suspicious persons near school	**X**	
Social perspective/ role taking		**X**
Behavioral interventions		**X**
Skills training		**X**
Marital and family therapy by clinical staff	**X** (pp. 88–90)	**X**
Wraparound services		**X**

Resilience, Youth Development, and Asset Development— A Summary of the Research

Research findings from Gregory Austin and California Healthy Start showed the following: "The exciting research findings were that parent-family connectedness and perceived school connectedness were protective against every health risk behavior measure. . . . *While much emphasis is placed on school policies governing adolescent behaviors, such policies appear . . . to have limited associations with the student behaviors under study* (emphasis added). Rather, school connectedness, influenced in good measure by perceived caring from teachers and high expectations for student performance was found to make the critical difference."[24]

How do we make each school into a caring and connected community? It does not require additional programs or curricula. Sometimes change may be as easy as a smile, a pat on the back, or a question about a pet. It may be as difficult as setting aside time to memorize names and faces and to know enough about all students to be able to link them to programs and opportunities that will help them grow and mature. Maybe it means learning a few phrases in someone's native language.

The theories of resilience, youth development, protective factors, and asset development are *not* about new programs that must be added to the already overflowing plate of what schools are required to teach. Instead, these are *strategies*, or methods, for doing what needs to be done in a way that builds students' strengths.

For example, SB 65 of 1985 created school-based pupil motivation and maintenance programs that require the use of student study teams (often referred to as student success teams) to reinforce a positive approach. The legislation and *Student Success Team Booklet* tell us *what* must be done. That is, a team, including the student, parent, teacher, counselor, and other school/community members who can provide support, meets to develop a written plan of action for teaching the student self-control and how to respect boundaries. *Resilience and youth development* give the team an *approach* that shows *how* to meet that goal by finding and nurturing the strengths and prosocial desires of the student.

The focus of youth development is a shift from youth risk to environmental risk. Under the youth development framework, schools will ask, What can we do to the environment to build assets and opportunities for kids?, instead of asking, What can we do to fix the kids?

The following definitions for the positive youth development theories are taken from *Getting Results, Update 1*.[25]

- *Asset development.* A vision that names the core elements of healthy development and the community actors needed to promote these building blocks.

- *Protective factors.* Relationships, social experiences, social environments, and competencies that protect youth from health-compromising behavior and increase positive outcomes. External supports and opportunities for youth, such as caring relationships, high expectations, and meaningful participation in activities, are known to foster positive developmental outcomes.
- *Resiliency.* The ability to bounce back in the face of adversity and to weather the effects of stress, insult, or injury. Resiliency-based research and practices focus on environmental and psychological factors that can help children transcend adversity.
- *Youth development.* An approach that helps youth build strong relationships with others, learn new skills, and give back to the community.

For people to be resilient, research tells us they need certain protective factors—qualities and characteristics that help "defend" them from unhealthy influences. When schools make a conscious effort to give every child protective factors, then those schools have created havens that encourage healthy behaviors.

Classroom connections can be very effective in giving students a majority, if not all, of the protective factors. The following list was synthesized from research by the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Bonnie Benard, the SEARCH Institute, Michael Resnick, Nan Henderson, and others. (See *Getting Results, Update 1* for a thorough summary of the research findings on resiliency, protective factors, and youth development.)

- *Success*—Academic programs need to be both rigorous and adaptable to fit the different learning styles and abilities of individual students so they can succeed.
- *Someone who believes in them*—Every child needs someone who has high expectations for her or him and offers encouragement and support. Teachers, parents, mentors, and other school staff and volunteers all play important roles in making sure that each child has a "cheerleader."
- *Service*—Schools need to give each child meaningful roles in serving not only the classroom and school communities but the larger community as well.
- *Skills*—Students need to feel competent in making decisions, being assertive, and managing their emotions.
- *Self-worth*—Students need to feel that they have value.
- *Perseverance*—Students who learn to persevere are able to experience the rewards of facing a challenge and mastering it.
- *Spirituality*—Faith in something bigger than themselves has a profound ability to give students hope (*Getting Results, Update 1,* pp. 33, 36).
- *Safety*—Students need to feel and be safe from bullying and prejudicial acts.
- *Others*—Humor, inner direction, perceptiveness, independence, a positive view of their personal future, flexibility, love of learning, and creativity are other protective factors that schools can foster.

In "For Want of Connectiveness," Ronald W. Garrison and Bonnie Benard had the following to say about resilience:

> A common finding in resilience research is the transformative power of teachers and schools to tip the scale from risk to resilience when they provide the three protective factors of caring relationships, high expectation messages, and opportunities for participation and contribution. Caring relationships means adults in the school listen to students and genuinely enjoy them. High expectation messages translates into adults in the school conveying the belief in each student's capacity to be successful and provide multiple opportunities for them to be so. Opportunities for participation and contribution mean adults in the school give students the power to make decisions, plan, solve problems, create, and work with and help others in their school and community."[26]

Research by M. J. Mayer and P. E. Leone showed promising results for creating an atmosphere of nonviolence in schools. They found that when schools relied on metal detectors and locker searches to achieve student safety, data showed higher rates of reported victimization in those schools than in schools where an atmosphere of safety was created through adherence to rules.[27]

Effective classroom management is essential if teachers are to have the time and energy to make youth development an integral part of each lesson so schoolwork is relevant for each student. Discipline problems not only rob the class of time on task; they also rob the perpetrators of a sense of mastery and service. The acting out is a way of expressing frustration and nonengagement with the lessons, the classroom community, and maybe even themselves.

What Current Data Tell Us About School Safety

According to the 1999–2000 *California Safe Schools Assessment* report, the chance of a homicide in a California school is less than one in a million, matching the national figures. Since 1993, the overall national school crime rate (theft, assault, and weapon violations) for students ages twelve to eighteen years has declined, as have rates of crime outside of school for this age group.[28]

According to a national report on crime written in 2000:

- Homicides are down by 13 percent; news coverage is up by 240 percent.
- Suspensions are up while crimes are down.
- Kids are more fearful in "secure buildings."
- More than 99 percent of violent deaths of children occurred outside school.[29]

In a 1999 report, the U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education analyzed 37 school shootings. They found that while there is no typical profile of a child who commits violence, the following recurring elements (all of which have implications for prevention) emerged:

- The attackers had planned their attacks, told others of their grievances, and often gave details about their plans.

- Two-thirds of the attackers felt bullied, persecuted, or threatened.
- More than half had a history of feeling extremely depressed or desperate.
- More than three-fourths had difficulty coping with a major change in a significant relationship or loss of status, such as a lost love or a humiliating failure.

The authors of the study warn against overreliance on metal detectors, SWAT teams, profiles, warning signs and checklists, zero tolerance policies, and software. Instead, they emphasize the importance of listening to students, dealing fairly with such grievances as bullying, improving communication in school, keeping guns away from children, and investigating promptly and thoroughly when a student raises a concern.[30]

The surgeon general's report, *Youth* Violence (Executive Summary—<*http://phs.os.dhhs.gov/library/youthviolence/summary.htm*>), found that, just as in California, the decrease in youth violence has not been matched by a decrease in antisocial behavior. This finding may be partially because schools are challenged to educate more students with severe behavior problems. Although these students represent only 1 to 5 percent of a school's enrollment, often they can account for more than 50 percent of the behavioral incidents handled by school office personnel.

School–law enforcement partnerships can be invaluable in meeting the needs of these students. Law enforcement partners can help schools set up referral systems so that these students receive comprehensive behavioral support from a variety of community agencies.

Databases of Effective Programs

Listed below are a number of databases the reader should find useful:

- California Healthy Kids Youth Survey. Development strategies, concepts, and research. Toll-free help line at (888) 841-7536. <*http://www.wested.org/hks*>.
- California Youth Connection: Empowering youth for leadership. <*http://www.calyouthconn.org/directory.html*>.
- *Catalog of School Reform Models.* Sixty-seven school models compiled by the Northwest Regional Laboratory. None focuses exclusively on safety, but they are models that have proven effective in raising academic achievement—one of the essential aspects of making schools safer. <*http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/natspec/catalog*>.
- Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (CSPV). *Blueprints for Violence Prevention.* <*http://www.Colorado.EDU/cspv/blueprints/promise/Default.htm*>.
- *Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General.* Descriptions of specific programs that meet standards for model and promising categories (Appendix 5-B). Appendix 5-B also includes a section on *ineffective* programs. <*http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/youthviolence/chapter5/appendix5b.html*>.
- Healthy Kids Resource Center. <*http://www.hkresources.org/*>.

- *The Nuts and Bolts of Implementing School Safety Programs.* Vera Institute of Justice, November 2000. Programs that have been researched for effectiveness and are categorized by topic (e.g., academic enrichment, anger management, bullying, family issues, gangs). <*http://www.vera.org/main.html*>. See list of publications.
- Programs That Work project of the Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) in the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Programs that work for preventing unhealthy lifestyles. <*http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/rtc/index.htm*>.
- *Safe Schools, Safe Students—A Guide to Violence Prevention Strategies.* A project guided by Drug Strategies Board of Directors and funded by a grant from the William T. Grant Foundation, 1998. <*http://www.drugstrategies.org/*>.
- *School-Based Prevention: Critical Components.* The Centers for the Application of Prevention Technologies (CAPT). A list of prevention programs that use community partnerships. The programs are organized at three levels: individual students, schools and classrooms, and the larger community environment. <*http://www2.edc.org/capt/services/products/papers/schoolcrit/*>.
- UCLA School Mental Health Project. An exhaustive resource list for school research and practices. (Under "Quick Find," use pull-down menu under "Select a response to a frequent request." <*http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/*>.

Positive Youth Development Resources

The following are some valuable resources on positive youth development:

- California Healthy Kids. Web site offering research, newsletters, consultants, and other resources to help schools develop healthy assets in their students. <*http://www.californiahealthykids.org/*>.
- *Getting Results, Update 1.* Excellent summaries of research on youth development and asset-building strategies. <*http://hec.cuesta.com/c/@p0VOW7HinXyYU/Pages/updates.html*>.
- International Youth Foundation (IYF) <*http://www.iyfnet.org/document.cfm/22*>.
- Resilience Net. A collaboration of Assist International, Inc., and the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education. <*http://resilnet.uiuc.edu*>.
- *Toward a Blueprint for Youth: Making Positive Youth Development a National Priority.* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau. <*http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/fysb/blueprint.htm*>.
- Youth Development as a Violence Intervention Model (National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center). <*http://www.safeyouth.org/topics/dev.htm*>.
- *Youth Development Strategies, Concepts and Research.* A supplement to the California Healthy Kids Survey—resilience module report—that lists effective, resiliency-based programs from adventure learning to 21st Century Community Learning Centers. <*www.wested.org/hks*>.

- YouthInfo. A Web site created by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and currently maintained by the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) of HHS. HHS and FYSB designed this site for those interested in learning about America's young people, their development into productive adults and engaged citizens, and ways to help them achieve their full potential. <*http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/fysb/youthinfo*>.
- *Youth Today, The Newspaper on Youth Work. Covers* youth development; juvenile justice; gang and violence prevention; adolescent health; teen pregnancy, sex, and parenting; after-school programs and mentoring; job training and school-to-work; and best practices.<*http://www.youthtoday.org/*>.

Notes

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